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# DISARMAMENT *and the* LEAGUE *of* NATIONS

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*An address by*  
LORD ROBERT CECIL

*delivered before the*  
FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION  
HOTEL ASTOR, NEW YORK  
APRIL 2, 1923

WITH A REPORT OF THE DISCUSSION

LORD ROBERT CECIL came to America, March 28, as the guest of the Foreign Policy Association. His address at the dinner in his honor on April 2, reported herein, was his first public speech in this country. Over 2,000 people of different shades of political opinion were present. The address was broadcast by WEAf.

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#### GUEST TABLE

Brig.-Gen. Henry T. Allen	Judge Julian W. Mack
Harry Gloster Armstrong	James G. McDonald
Philip Baker	Dr. Sidney E. Mezes
Bernard M. Baruch	William Fellowes Morgan
Lord Robert Cecil	Miss Ruth Morgan
Maj. Marlborough Churchill	Frank A. Munsey
Everett Colby	Albert Oliver
Herbert Croly	Arthur W. Page
R. Fulton Cutting	Very Rev. Howard C. Robbins
Hon. John W. Davis	Dr. Wickliffe Rose
Reverend Francis P. Duffy	Dr. Wm. Jay Schieffelin
Mrs. Charles Dana Gibson	Francis H. Sisson
Harold A. Hatch	Mrs. Willard D. Straight
Frederic C. Howe	Mrs. Frank Day Tuttle
Mr. & Mrs. Otto H. Kahn	Oswald Garrison Villard
Paul U. Kellogg	Dr. Chaim Weizmann
Dr. Frederick P. Keppel	Sir William Wiseman
Mr. & Mrs. Thos. W. Lamont	Rabbi Stephen S. Wise

# DISARMAMENT

*and the*

## LEAGUE of NATIONS

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MR. JAMES G. McDONALD, *Chairman*

**W**E MEET tonight, Lord Robert, to welcome you to America. We welcome you, Sir, because of those inestimable gifts of language, law, political institutions and cultural achievements which you and we inherit from our common motherland. We welcome you as a distinguished member of a family which for many centuries has contributed generously toward our common Anglo-Saxon heritage. But we welcome you most of all as a courageous, far-seeing and deeply spiritual representative of Britain's, of Europe's, yea, of mankind's unutterable longing for peace. (Applause.)

We meet also, Sir, to consider with you some of the acutely critical phases of the present international situation. The Germans laid down their arms more than four years and four months ago. You, even more than we, must have felt when the news of the armistice came a keen sense of poignant relief. At last slaughter on a wholesale scale was to be ended. At last there was to be peace. At last a beginning of reconciliation. At last a beginning of reconstruction. You, Sir, must realize, even better than we, how these expectations have been frustrated, how these hopes have been shattered. Europe today knows not peace. Instead of the healing spirit of reconciliation there are ever present in many countries of Europe the embittering shadows of suspicion and hatred. Everywhere rehabilitation has been halting and incomplete.

Amidst these disappointed hopes there has been one outstanding cause for encouragement. One institution which, though still weak, because incomplete, has steadily and intelligently sought to strengthen the forces of reconstruction and of peace. For your part, Sir, in helping to frame the covenant, for your tactful but always courageous leadership in the assembly, and for your frank recognition of the present weaknesses of the council and assembly, all friends of the League of Nations owe you an enormous debt of gratitude. (Applause.)

But we, and all the world, are deeply your debtors also for your pioneer and statesmanlike program of European land disarmament as a part of a comprehensive European pact of mutual guarantees.

Europe must, if it is not to perish, drastically reduce its armament and somehow achieve political security. Security and disarmament are two parts of the same problem. They must be solved together if they are to be solved at all. Yours are the first concrete and practicable proposals for both land disarmament and European security. It is peculiarly fitting therefore that the Foreign Policy Association, whose primary purpose is to contribute towards a better understanding among our own people of the problems of international relations, should be the first formally to welcome you to America. More than two years ago, Sir, we first invited you. We are delighted that at last you are here. Your expressed willingness to answer questions after your address gives to this occasion something of the homelike atmosphere of our regular Saturday luncheon-discussions, and perhaps, Sir, we may hope for some of the heat and I hope also some of the light which is associated with these regular Saturday discussions. Speak, Lord Robert, what is in your heart, you are among friends. Lord Robert Cecil.

## LORD ROBERT CECIL

**M**R. McDONALD, Ladies and Gentlemen: In the first place, let me tender to you my warmest thanks for the kindness of your welcome, for this fresh proof of the hospitality, so world-famous, of the American people, and above all, let me thank the Foreign Policy Association for the extraordinary success with which this gathering has been organized. It is, I am sorry to say, the first time that I have had the honor of visiting this country, and it is a matter of profound pride and gratification that I should at last, after many disappointments, have the opportunity of saying something which possibly may be of use and of hearing something which I am satisfied will be greatly to my profit in intercourse with a great audience like this.

I have many reasons for gratification at this opportunity. I am not one of those who have forgotten the comradeship of our two peoples in the great war. I shall never forget as long as I live that thrill of joy and happiness with which I heard the decision of the American people to take their part by the side of the Allies in that great struggle.

I shall always remember the thrill with which we watched the first battalions of American troops marching through London; and I shall never forget, nor will any of my fellow countrymen, the glorious deeds and magnificent services which the American army rendered to our common cause in those critical days of 1918. (Applause.) I remember very well that my happiness—our happiness, I

think I may say—was not only for the immediate assistance which you gave to us, but because we saw the dawn of a new era in which our two peoples should march together in the cause of peace.

There have been, as Mr. McDonald has already said, many disillusiones and discouragements since the armistice was signed, but I for one have not abandoned, and will never abandon, the hope that the great work of peace will ultimately be accomplished by the joint effort of the American and British peoples. (Loud applause.)

There have been quite recently, if you will allow me to refer to it, some circumstances which have greatly heartened and encouraged those who think as we do. I rejoice profoundly that we have settled and put out of the way that difficult question of the debt, and I am not less, not more, thankful for what I hope I may call the straightforwardness of our representative, Mr. Baldwin, and his colleagues, than for the generosity of the American negotiators who met them and concluded that great arrangement. (Applause.) It is one of those arrangements like 'the quality of mercy, it blesses him that gives and him that takes.' (Laughter.) And its greatest virtue lay not in the particular terms arrived at, though I have no criticism of them; it lay in this, that it was the first great liquidation of the economic position left by the war, and furnished a great example to other nations of what ought to be done if we are to reach a real condition of peace. (Applause.)

And, ladies and gentlemen, that is not the only instance, by any means, of cooperation between our two countries. There were just about a year ago completed the negotiations which resulted in the Washington treaty of disarmament. That was a very great thing. It was a concrete achievement in the cause of peace. It is quite true it applied necessarily only to naval matters, and was in the nature rather of a limitation than a reduction. It is quite true that it applied only to capital ships; and there are many I should imagine, certainly you and I in this room among them, who would have been very glad if it could have gone even further than it did. For our part, at least for my part, I should rejoice greatly if we could have a similar limitation, not only of capital ships, but of submarines and other craft also. (Applause.) All warfare is cruel and horrible, but in naval warfare I do not know anything which is more cruel and more horrible than the hidden attack of the submarine, made without warning, made without discrimination, an attack which may send to their death not only the troops and combatants, not only the men of the opposing party, but women and children also. It seems deplorable that when we came to limit naval armaments, we could not limit the worst and the cruellest of all those armaments. (Applause.) I don't forget that regulations were agreed to which would make that form of warfare more humane. I am very glad they were made, but I should deceive you if I pretended that any regulations for humanizing warfare were really likely to be of great value. (Applause.) War is a horrible



and devilish thing, and when nations under the stress of that experience are at death grips with one another, when their whole future and existence depend on the result of the struggle, it is too much to expect that any paper regulations will limit or humanize the means which they employ; and if we doubted it, the experience of the late war is a terrible warning to those who think that there is any means by which you can make war more tolerable. The only thing is to prevent its happening; that is the only security for humanity.

Ladies and gentlemen, in addition to naval disarmament, perhaps more urgently even than that, we require ultimate disarmament, immediate reduction in armament, both by land and in the air. (Applause.) After all, in many ways, land armaments are more destructive to peace, more dangerous to humanity than armaments by sea. You cannot invade a country with a fleet. That can only be done by infantry. You cannot make—at least it is not very easy to make—a sudden and unforeseen death stroke at the life of a country by a fleet. That is the work of a land army attacking without provocation and without warning. And if that is true of a land army it is even more true of the air. You know—we all know—that in the last war attack from the air was for the first time made a practical part of warfare. We all remember—we at any rate on the other side of the Atlantic, remember—what bombing from the sky really meant. We have a vivid recollection of great explosives falling indiscriminately in the most populous and peaceful of our cities, slaughtering without discrimination every kind of human being, destroying the most harmless and the most helpless just as readily as those who were fighting in the field. What was done in the late war is but a pale shadow of what will be done in future wars. I am told that already bombs exist one hundred times as powerful and destructive as any that were used in the last war, capable of destroying great areas. And it is not only destruction that is threatened but poison as well. A bomb may be dropped from the sky on a great city. It may level large areas of it to the ground. It may poison the whole of the population for, it may be, miles around the place it falls. Nor does even that exhaust the possibility of air attack. There are some human beings who are planning, I am told, that you should be able, not only to poison, but to kill by disease the population by bombing from the air.

Nor will any country be safe, for just as the extent of the damage to be done has grown enormously, so also has the range of attack; and it is no wild idea that in the near future it will be as easy to send aeroplanes across the Atlantic as it is now to send them across the Channel. Ladies and gentlemen, this, if it stood alone, would be surely a strong call to the peoples of the world to set their house in order, and to make a determined effort to limit these agencies of destruction before it is too late.

But do not misunderstand me. I do not wish to belittle what was done at Washington. It was a splendid achievement. It was a magnificent step on the road which we all wish to follow, all the more desirable, all the more admirable, because it was the first step; and we know from the French proverb that it is the first step that is really difficult. But when we take the first step let us ask, where is that first step going? What is the position we have now reached? In my judgment, we have come to a great crisis in the history of humanity. I agree with what my countryman, Lord Grey, said the other day: "The nations must learn or perish." That is the truth; that is the dilemma; that is the issue that is laid before all of us, wherever we live, whatever our station in life, whatever our political or social aspirations.

I had the honor of crossing the Atlantic in company with a number of your fellow citizens who were returning from a visit they had paid to Egypt to see the marvelous discoveries which have recently been made in that land. They spoke to me with interest and enthusiasm of the astonishing degree to which the ancient civilization of Egypt had been perfected. There were others who had been to Crete and who told me the same story, that the ruins and remnants of Crete show an extraordinary degree of civilization in that land four or five thousand years ago. And yet these civilizations, so advanced, so perfected, had so completely disappeared that it is only the work of scientific observers in the last few years that has brought to light any trace of their existence. Or take the case of Rome. I agree we know more about Rome than we do about Egypt and Crete. But I do not think that it is realized how far Roman civilization had advanced. I was told the other day that when in 1835 the English Minister, Sir Robert Peele, was summoned hastily from Rome to create a government in my country he took precisely the same time, no more, no less, than a Roman emperor would have taken in performing the same journey 1700 years before. Yet the Roman civilization perished, barbarism recovered possession of the whole of Europe, and the condition of my country and of the greater part, if not the whole of European countries, relapsed so that that civilization became a mere dream and memory. It is said often that Rome perished by reason of the invasion of the barbarians round her borders. Ladies and gentlemen, there is no truth in that delusion. Rome perished because the sections and nations which made up the Roman Empire were unable to keep from fighting with one another; they destroyed the Roman structure and the barbarians merely came onto the scene of the crime after it had been committed. Rome committed suicide. Let us take care that our civilization does not commit suicide also. (Applause.)

And if we are to work for real peace, a real established peace, be well assured that we have no security for its permanence unless we succeed in limiting and reducing the armaments of the world. There is no use to hope that there is any real security for permanent

peace so long as the nations stand on one side or the other of their borders armed to the teeth for aggressive warfare. Every one agrees to that, not only in this country but practically all over the world. There is no dissenting voice; they all say that armaments should be reduced; and yet at this moment no reduction has taken place in the aggregate. Some of the great nations have reduced to some extent their numbers from just before the war, but other great nations, and other nations not so great but just as warlike, called into existence by the peace, have each insisted on their armed establishment, and in spite of the fact that Germany has very largely been disarmed, I am told that the net amount of armed men in Europe is greater than it was before the late war.

That is not only a very serious thing for the cause of peace ultimately, but it constitutes an economic drain on the resources of Europe much too much for her in her present condition, and one which she can ill afford to bear. And the worst of it is that armaments breed armaments. If one country is armed, the next country is armed. If one increases its armament, the next country increases its armament. We read sometimes in the papers of terrible cases of human beings who have become addicted to some of these horrible drugs, morphine, cocaine or the like, and they go on taking more and more of them until they are ruined body and soul. We call them drug maniacs. Ladies and gentlemen, I fear very much that there are still some armament maniacs left among the nations of the world. We who really seriously desire peace, who are not only talking about it, but wish to do something for it, let us consider for a moment what is the cause of this horrible state of things.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, the disease is a fearful one, but luckily, the diagnosis is simple. What keeps alive armaments is one thing and one thing only. It is the fear and suspicion of the nations for one another. That is at the bottom of most of the troubles that afflict our world at the present time. Well, ladies and gentlemen, what is the remedy for that? Why, the remedy is simple enough; at any rate simple enough to pronounce. We must have a new spirit in international affairs. We must get rid of the idolatry of force. (Applause.) We must get the nations to recognize—and many millions of them do recognize it—that it is not force that counts in human affairs, but reason and persuasion. (Applause.) We all recognize that in our individual capacity. Force does not count in our individual lives. It is not a motive that really has any importance for us. If we look at the great organization of a city like this, at the intricate arrangements that have to be made to enable life there to be carried on, they are not the result of force. It is not because you or those who live here are afraid of violence that they do conform to the usages of civilized society. They do it voluntarily. The vast majority of their actions, the vast number of those proceedings which make life in a great city or life in the coun-



try possible, tolerable, for those who live there, are dictated by the most powerful influence in the world, the public opinion of your fellows. It governs your dress, it governs what you eat, it governs the games at which you play; it governs almost everything you do, from your business to your pleasure, from morning until evening. It is public opinion which governs—next to your self-respect and your own judgment of what is right—it is public opinion that governs you throughout the whole of your life. And what is true with individuals is true, or ought to be true, with nations, so that if you take the proper steps to concentrate, to develop and to publish public opinion throughout the world, a nation bent on a desperate effort to assassinate its neighbor will be restrained by the obloquy of the whole civilized world. And the first condition that is necessary for that is to get rid of these vast and threatening armaments which prevent the full power of public opinion throughout the world. (Applause.)

Well, now, what are the conditions which it is necessary to fulfill if you are to induce the nations of the world to disarm? You have no great land armaments in this country. Why? Because you are not threatened by any neighbors who desire to attack you—or not seriously threatened. (Laughter.) If you could get the same state of mind in Europe, you would get the same result. If you could say to the nations of Europe: "Don't be afraid. There is no real danger. You may sleep quietly in your beds. You may put off once for all this vast burden of armaments. You may cease to create dangers for your neighbors in the effort to create safety for yourself." If we could say to the nations: "We will give you security which will enable you to dispense with armaments," then we could ask them to disarm. I believe that can be done. I believe it can be done like this. Take a continent, a quarter of the globe, like Europe; if all the nations there were to agree that if each of them reduced their armaments to an agreed amount, all of them would come to the assistance of any one of them who was attacked—just think what a splendid advance that would be. It would rule out aggressive attack forever. Aggressive attack would be so dangerous that no nation would ever undertake it. And if you get rid of aggression, you get rid of war, because war must begin by aggression on one side or the other. I am firmly convinced that an arrangement of that kind in Europe would be of enormous advantage, and I would like to see as part of that arrangement an agreement among the nations, at any rate among the nations who felt themselves in danger of attack, that there should be a zone between nation and nation, demilitarized and made incapable of being used without delay and preparation for the advance of an invading army, so that the guarantee offered to them by other nations in Europe would become effective before it was too late. That is the kind of scheme by which I think security might be given. But it is evident that for that scheme to be effective, you must create or utilize some international authority. Disarmament to be effective must be general. You will never get one na-

tion to disarm as long as other nations arm. If you are to carry out a general scheme of disarmament, you must have an international organization to supervise it. If you are to have a scheme of zones, of demilitarized zones, you must have an international authority to overlook it. But you have got to do something much more than that, you have got to carry out and to apply,—not to Europe only but to all nations,—you have got to carry out a scheme of moral disarmament as well as material disarmament. (Applause.) You have got to bring the nations together, to teach them that their common interests are far greater than their common antagonisms, to teach them that just as it is true of individuals that we are all parts one of another, and that if individuals in a great community suffer, then the whole community suffers; so we must teach the nations of the world that they are all parts of one common whole; and that it is untrue, a devilish untruth, that there is any advantage to any one nation in the misfortunes or the poverty of others. (Applause.) International cooperation is not only a proper object, it is inevitable. If there are more than a million men now out of work in England, it is, very largely if not entirely, because of the economic difficulties which exist in the rest of Europe. If the farmers of the United States are unable to sell their wheat at a remunerative price, it is because their customers in Europe are unable to buy it. The economic interdependence of the world is a great fact, it is not a thing about which we need argue, it is a fact which we cannot get out of. And if the economic interdependence of the world is a fact, much more is the scientific, the intellectual, the moral interdependence of the world a fact also. (Applause.) Why, ladies and gentlemen, it may well be that some medical or scientific discovery in Europe will affect the lives of thousands of people in this country, just as some improvement in the works of civilization here, transportation or what not, may brighten the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in Europe. Science and art and intellect and morals have no boundaries. The world is one, humanity is one family; that is a fact which no sophisms of political philosophers can ever alter or destroy. (Applause.) And therefore, ladies and gentlemen, as wise men we must, as it seems to me, recognize that great fact. We must recognize that there are great common interests in the world, and we must do our best to provide for them. There are great moral evils which affect the whole world. There are great difficulties of intercommunication, there are great dangers of epidemic diseases, there are great diversities of social conditions which have their reaction on the prosperity and happiness of the people of every country. Let us recognize and work to diminish those common evils. Let us surely agree, if we can agree on nothing else, on joint international action to this end; for the improvement of the lot of humanity in those ways is surely the interest not only of the whole world but of every nation that composes the world.

Therefore we must have, surely we must have at any rate for those purposes periodic meetings, conferences, discussions, some

kind of machinery to make those discussions and conferences effective; and, let us add, surely we may add this: some kind of machinery for diminishing the danger of international disputes, and preventing disputes from degenerating into war. Is that so very unreasonable? Does that really offend any of our prejudices, or any of our pre-conceived opinions? And that, ladies and gentlemen, as you all know, is fundamentally all that the League of Nations proposes to do (Applause; prolonged applause). Ladies and gentlemen, the central idea of the League of Nations, as I understand it, is a system of international conferences and cooperation, not depending on coercion, without coercion, without force, without any interference with the sovereignty or full independence and freedom of action of any of its members, working not for any selfish interests, but for the establishment of better and more brotherly relations between the nations, and for the establishment of peace upon the earth. (Applause.) That is the idea of the League. I believe myself that in its broad lines, the Covenant carries out that idea. But I am not bigoted about it, nor is any other intelligent advocate of the League. We don't say that the Covenant is perfect, or was inspired from heaven. We are prepared all of us to support amendments if amendments are required.

I myself believe that the theory that the League of Nations as established by the Covenant could be used in any way as a super-state is totally untrue. (Applause.) But if I am wrong and if it can be pointed out that there is any article in the Covenant which is justly open to such a charge, for what my assistance is worth, I tender it in support of any amendment that may be necessary to put it right. But I do beg those who criticise the League not to rest on *a priori* considerations. Let them not only read the Covenant but let them, I beg them, study the working, the actual working of the League. I assert that the League has already done much for the betterment of mankind. I assert that through its means hundreds of thousands of prisoners of war have been rescued from hardship and starvation. I assert that effective measures have been taken to prevent the spread of epidemics over Europe from the oppressed and miserable districts of Western Russia. I assert that more has been done in the three years since the League of Nations came into existence for putting an end to that terrible evil, the trade in noxious drugs, than has been done for fifty years before; and I assert that with almost equal speed conventions have been agreed on through the instrumentality of the League which will really, I hope, put a spoke in the wheel of those devilish beings who carry on the white slave traffic. I assert that the League has been the means of settling several grave international disputes. I assert that in settling those disputes the League has shown a high impartiality, not hesitating to decide if justice so required in favor of the weaker rather than the stronger of the disputants. (Applause.) I assert that the League's recommendations—and remember that the League only proceeds by recommendations, never by forcing its decisions on the



people concerned,—I assert that the League's recommendations have been accepted in almost every case. Why, ladies and gentlemen, let me give you one instance, well known, concerning a small country, but very striking—I refer to the case of Albania. What happened? Here was a country, a little country, about a million inhabitants just brought into existence, recognized by the League's efforts for the first time, struggling into statehood. It comes to the League. It asks for protection against a much larger neighbor. The League finds the larger neighbor has actually invaded Albania with its troops, that its troops are moving forward. The Council is summoned. The neighbor is warned that it must not continue to do what it is doing, it must not go to war until whatever grievances it has have been considered in a peaceful way. And instantly the neighbor withdraws all its troops, withdraws them without doing any harm to the country, withdraws them without anger, without that terrible feeling which so often results from international decisions reached by other means, and which leaves an open sore afterwards to break out and cause irreparable damage.

So little of the soreness existed in this case that the two nations immediately afterwards entered into a treaty of amity and commerce. And I, myself, heard the Foreign Minister of the invading state, speaking at the tribunal of the Assembly of the League, declare that the relations between the two countries were now excellent and friendly, and attribute that happy result to the mediation and influence of the League. Now, ladies and gentlemen, it is all very well to say that Albania is a tiny country; it is all very well to say that what can be done in a small country cannot necessarily be done in a large one; but I reply that it shows that the line we are on is the right line; that the machinery devised is not unsuitable for the purpose; that we have got a good machine, and the only thing that we want is sufficient motive power in that machine to make it able to accomplish all its tasks, however great. Well, ladies and gentlemen, there are many other things the League has done. You have heard quite recently of its great work in establishing a Permanent Court of International Justice, fenced round with every precaution for independence and impartiality. You have heard how it has done much to rescue Austria from a condition of economic despair. Then, there is the work it has done in the direction of the reduction of armaments, work necessarily incomplete at present, but far more promising than anything that has ever been done before. Ladies and gentlemen, I have taken disarmament as my chief subject this evening, as the chief example of international work, which I desired to bring before you. I have taken it because the work of the League towards disarmament is to my mind characteristic of the spirit of the League. A well known Englishman once said that force was no remedy. Ladies and gentlemen, that is abundantly true. As our English proverb has it, you can bring a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink. You can do much by force, but when it comes to constructive reform and reconstruction, force is of the very



least possible value. You have only got to see,—I won't dwell on it,—you have only got to compare the comparative impotence of the Supreme Council, which rests on force, with the prolific efforts during the same period of the League, which rests on persuasion.

For the League rests on persuasion, and not on force; it relies on public opinion as its great agent. The best men and women in the world today, whether they are treated as aggregates of nations or in their individual capacity, though they may do wrong, desire what is right. And therefore, if you can concentrate on the affairs of the world, the instructed public opinion of the men and women in the world, you have got to the greatest agency for improvement that is available in human affairs.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, that is the broad case on principle that I put to you for my views; and you may say, well, that is all very fine, but what do you want? for what have you come to America? (Laughter.) Has not America already done quite enough for Europe? Ladies and gentlemen, I recognize most fully all that America has done for Europe. I tried in my opening observations, to express something of the gratitude we in Europe feel for her assistance and for her sacrifices in the late war. I do not come as far as I am concerned, to ask for a single dollar or a single man. If you will allow me to say so, I am not come as a suppliant to America. I came here to tell you what I know of the action and the objects of the League; and to hear from you, as I hope I shall hear, criticisms and suggestions, not made in a merely carping spirit, but constructed with a desire to advance the great cause which I firmly believe the American people have as much at heart as any people in the world. (Applause.) I do not venture to ask you to do anything; but I will ask you one or two questions. I have no complaint or criticism at all, very much the reverse, for what America has done for Europe; but has she done,—I only ask it,—has she done enough for herself? She desires to avoid, no one can complain of it, entanglements in the affairs of Europe. She wishes to keep herself free from the wickedness and perversity, so I am told, of the rest of the world. (Applause.) But can she be free? Is it possible for her to carry out that policy? Why, ladies and gentlemen, in 1917 the people of America, I am sure, desired peace as much as any people in the world, as much as we English desired it ourselves. And yet, as I am informed, by an almost unanimous national decision, she decided that it was essential for her to go into the war. It was essential, she thought, on that occasion. Suppose there is another world war, involving, as all world wars must involve, great questions of right and wrong. Are you sure that America will not feel herself forced, as she did in 1917, again to enter that war? Is there anyone here who will tell me that the decision of 1917 was wrong? I do not believe it. And if it was not wrong then, can they be certain that they will not be forced to an equally right decision in a future world war? But if that were so, is it not intensely desirable that there should be

no world war, even from the point of view of American interests? Is it really true that she can afford to stand aside, and allow any kind of a disaster to happen in Europe, any kind of war to begin there, hoping, gambling on the chance that it won't so far extend as to compel her, be it by her moral or her material interests, to take her part? I ask you the question. It is for you to decide. And if you say yes, there should be some safeguard against future war, then I do earnestly ask you, not to tell me but to tell yourselves, to think for yourselves what that safeguard should be; whether there is some better safeguard than we, the 52 nations of the League, have devised for ourselves; and if so, what are the alterations, what are the changes, what are the modifications that you think essential in order to make a satisfactory protection and safeguard against this overpowering evil? For when war begins no one can limit its extent. That is the truth which history teaches, and which all intelligent men and women should recognize.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, I put to you those questions. In any case we in Europe must go on; we cannot draw back from this great experiment. We are bound by every consideration of prudence and honor to pursue it to the end: prudence, because we see no other hopeful means to preserve our civilization, honor because we who remain solemnly pledged ourselves to those who died that we would make it our first object to prevent a recurrence of the calamity that overwhelmed them.

Surely you will forgive me if I say that "the world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did . . . It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion,—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain."

(Continued applause; standing applause.)

THE CHAIRMAN, MR. McDONALD: There are to be no other speakers. He would be a very rash person indeed, who undertakes to follow that eloquent appeal. However, Lord Robert will be glad to answer any questions which you wish to address to him. He has not come here merely to plead a cause or to make a statement and then to run away. So I shall be very glad to recognize anybody from the floor, not to make a speech, even a very brilliant speech will not be welcome from the floor, but a question addressed to Lord Robert, either on the immediate subject of his talk or a related subject.

MR. RATCLIFFE<sup>1</sup>: Mr. Chairman, an incident occurred in the House of Commons a few weeks ago in which Lord Robert Cecil was concerned, which has aroused a great deal of interest among

<sup>1</sup> S. K. Ratcliffe. Lecturer, formerly American correspondent of the Manchester Guardian.

English and Americans on this side. They are asking why it was, when the proposal was made from the Liberal side of the House of Commons, that the present dispute in the Ruhr should be submitted to the League of Nations, Lord Robert gave his voice against that suggestion and his reasons. We should like, I think, to have a statement from Lord Robert on that exceedingly interesting point.

THE CHAIRMAN, MR. McDONALD: Mr. Ratcliffe, who is a fellow Britisher of Lord Robert, has put the first question, which is this, if I may re-phrase it in my Hoosier dialect. An amendment was proposed to the address from the throne in the opening of the new Parliament. The amendment, as I understand, was proposed by the Liberal Party. It called upon the British Government and immediately urged or required the reference of the Ruhr dispute to the League of Nations, and Lord Robert, as I understood it, voted and spoke against that immediate, that single resolution. The question is, will he explain that vote and that expression of opinion.

LORD ROBERT: I am very glad indeed to explain, and I am particularly glad that my actions in the House of Commons excite so much interest over here. An amendment to the address, in our English procedure, amounts to a vote of want of confidence in the Government of the day; and therefore, it was essential for the government, whatever they thought about the motion itself, to vote against it. The question I had to resolve was whether I should vote with them or vote against them. I had no doubt at all, and I stated that I had no doubt, that it was desirable that this dispute should be referred to the League of Nations at the earliest possible moment; but I thought, and I think, that when it comes to a great and critical exercise of the executive action of any country, it must be left to the executive government of the day to decide the moment and the method by which that action may most usefully be taken. I said, therefore, that while I was in favor of the policy recommended, I could not be a party putting the House of Commons, without the knowledge which a government necessarily has, into the place of the executive. I regretted, I still regret, that an attempt was made, as it seems to me, to utilize the League of Nations for party purposes. I have no desire that it should ever be used for party purposes, on one side or the other, and in these circumstances, I thought it was better, I thought it was my duty as a member of Parliament to give the vote I did. I am glad to remember also that in a subsequent debate, the leader of the Liberal Party, the party that proposed the amendment, expressed the view that the action I had taken was, from my point of view, perfectly right and legitimate. (Hear, Hear; Applause.)

THE CHAIRMAN: We are starting very well.

MR. WHEELER<sup>2</sup>: I have one question to ask. It is this. Lord Robert will remember that when the Versailles Treaty, including the

<sup>2</sup> Everett P. Wheeler, chairman committee international law American Bar Association, 1896-1907; president New York Civil Service Reform Association, 1914-18; president Intercollegiate Branch Y. M. C. A., 1912-19.

Covenant of the League of Nations, was sent to our American Senate for ratification, a majority of the Senate, not two-thirds, but a majority of the Senate proposed certain reservations. They failed to receive a two-thirds vote, and the treaty consequently was not ratified. My question is this: In your opinion, Lord Robert, if the treaty had been ratified with those reservations, would the nations of Europe, parties to the League, have acquiesced in them?

LORD ROBERT: Well, I am in a little of a difficulty, because I remember those reservations were very numerous, and I don't remember in detail everything that was in them. Therefore I hesitate to reply with a plain affirmative or negative, as I like to do to questions that are asked me. All I can say is this: that I am satisfied that the nations of the world would not display any pettifogging or huckstering spirit in dealing with any offer of cooperation that might come from America; that they would not look too closely at the terms of their offer; that those of us who are really and sincerely anxious to obtain world cooperation for a worthy object, would be ready to accept that cooperation—I will not say in any form it was offered,—but in any form that was at all consistent with the main object for which the cooperation was asked.

MR. DESMOND<sup>3</sup>: May I ask you something: If the League of Nations is potent to the settlement of international disputes as Lord Robert says, why is it that the dispute between the Irish irregulars and the Free State has not been referred to it?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Well, the warfare in Ireland is—I have not been there—but if I may trust the reports in the papers, it is in the nature of a civil war. It is a warfare carried on unhappily by Irishmen against Irishmen. It is a matter for the deepest regret that it should go on and continue, but the League of Nations exists necessarily not to deal with internal affairs, however deplorable, however dangerous they may be. It has enough to do if it settles the affairs between the nations of the world without attempting to deal with affairs which are of a domestic and internal character. (Applause.) At the same time—for I want to give as full an answer as I can—at the same time if there were any assurances given to the League of Nations that its decisions would be acceptable to the parties (laughter)—I mean this very seriously—I am quite sure that the League would be ready to do whatever it could to put an end to the struggles and to the incidents which all lovers of Ireland and humanity most profoundly deplore. (Applause.)

MR. HOSSAIN<sup>4</sup> (From box): Mr. Chairman, I should like to ask Lord Robert Cecil if, in order to achieve the disarmament of which he has spoken, he is prepared to advocate the scrapping of European imperialism in the East and more specifically the scrapping

<sup>3</sup> Shaw Desmond, author and journalist.

<sup>4</sup> Syud Hossain, follower of Gandhi, lecturer, delegate from Indian National Assembly to Paris Conference of 1920.



of British imperialism in Egypt, India, Mesopotamia and elsewhere where British rule rests upon force and not upon the moral consent of the governed.

LORD ROBERT: I am prepared to advocate the scrapping of any policy which I should describe as imperialistic, whether it was the policy of my own country or of any other. But I would not advocate in the case of my own country or of any other the abandonment of any trust undertaken by that country on behalf of weak and struggling peoples. And I would not advocate any policy which would hand over the populations of great districts to disorder, bloodshed and slaughter, because plausible arguments were suggested for that course by those who, it may be, would not suffer from the result of the policy they recommend.

THE CHAIRMAN: I wonder if Lord Robert might come back to an American question which has been handed to me. It says: Lord Robert, you were frank enough to say the other day that you admitted there were serious faults in the Covenant and in the structure of the League. Would you care to tell us what you consider some of its defects. You are aware, of course, that these faults and others played a very great part in the rejection of the treaty by our Senate. You cannot, however, be aware that one reason for the American position to the League is the widespread belief that despite the machinery created by the Covenant for the amendment of the Covenant, it is practically impossible, since any change would call for an unanimous vote by the Council of the League. It would, I am sure, tend to clarify the situation in this country if you felt that you could give us your opinion both as to the possibility of amendment and whether, if it is possible, there is in your judgment, a likelihood of there being an earnest effort to rebuild the structure of the League along more democratic lines within the next five years.

LORD ROBERT: I am asked really two substantial questions: One is a question of procedure and one is a question of substance. As to the question of procedure I am of opinion that there is no insuperable difficulty in obtaining amendments to the Covenant. I think in a great international instrument amendments ought only to be carried out with caution and with reserve. I think, therefore, it is right that they should only be carried out with the assent of those who are the principal members of the League,—principal either because of their situation in the world, or because they have been elected by their fellows to represent them on the Council of the League. But my experience is that if there is a real genuine opinion in the Assembly that a particular change ought to be made, the Council have never shown themselves reactionary or obstructive in accepting that intimation of opinion, and I believe that any amendment which can be supported by solid reasons would have a very good chance of being adopted and carried through under the constitution of the League.

Now, as to the question of substance, I am asked whether I would like to see changes made in the Covenant, and particularly

changes in the direction of making it more democratic. I say that I would like to see some changes made in the Covenant, but I am not quite sure what is meant by democratic changes. The Assembly and the Council at present consist of those who have been nominated to attend its meetings by the citizens of the respective countries which have been entrusted under democratic constitutions with the principal direction of the affairs of these countries. I do not myself see how, from a purely democratic point of view, you could greatly improve that constitution; but if there is any particular proposal that it is desired to put forward in that direction, I am quite sure it would receive ample consideration.

As to the changes in the structure of the Covenant, when I first said I thought there were defects in the Covenant, I think I was mainly considering two. One was that I think it would be very desirable to include in the Covenant some quite express and definite declaration in favor of the abolition of war (applause); and secondly, I would like to see the membership of the League expanded so as to include all important nations who are at present outside it. (Applause.)

THE CHAIRMAN: May I suggest that Lord Robert is very tired, his throat—

LORD ROBERT (interrupting): No, no, it's all right. (Applause.)

THE CHAIRMAN: Let's compromise between his willingness to answer questions all evening and our own sense of regard for his welfare, and the fact that we have promised him to a great many audiences by permitting him to answer one more question and then we will say goodnight.

MR. ZIMMERN<sup>5</sup>: Could not Lord Robert tell us what progress has been made up to date with the League's disarmament scheme. I think it would be of great interest to this body.

THE CHAIRMAN: Before Lord Robert answers that question, I might just tell you an item of interest; that is, that among the 800,000 people who are reported to be listening to this discussion on the radio here, one of them is ex-President Wilson. (Applause; prolonged applause; standing applause).

LORD ROBERT: The progress in the direction of disarmament has been manifold. The League has agreed to summon a conference of all the powers to extend the principles of the Washington treaty to all those powers that were not represented and were not bound by the Washington treaty. I hope that that conference will take place very shortly. The League has further agreed on the general principles that disarmament to be effective must be general,

<sup>5</sup> Prof. Alfred E. Zimmermann, formerly Professor of International Politics, University College of Wales; now Exchange Professor at Cornell University; Author of *Europe in Convalescence*; *Nationality and Government*, etc., etc.

and that in order to secure anything like general disarmament you must provide some security to enable those nations that at present rely on their armaments to rely on the efforts of all their neighbors to protect them. It has instructed a committee to draw up a definite scheme in the form of a treaty to carry out those general principles. That committee has met several times. It has now before it a draft treaty to carry out those objects. It has discussed that draft treaty not unfavorably, and it is to pass upon it definitely at its meeting summoned for the 4th of June next. If, as I hope, it accepts that draft in some such form as it now stands, that treaty will come before the Assembly in September next and if it is adopted there it will go to the various governments for ratification, for approval and ratification, during the course of the following year.

In the meantime the League has pressed upon the governments of the world the desirability of cutting down their expenses on armaments to the greatest degree possible. As I told you just now the armaments are far too great, but they have been cut down considerably, and we have every hope that they will be cut down further in the coming year.

One other thing the League has very much at heart; it desires a universal agreement to limit and control the traffic in arms. We have not yet been fortunate enough to secure the full assent of all the governments, but we have got an assent to the principle, I think, of some such limitation from all the governments, and we are awaiting specific proposals from the government that showed itself least favorable to the scheme, which has assured us of its desire to co-operate in dealing with this matter.

I think that comprises the greater part of the work the League has done. The subject is evidently one of not less difficulty than importance, and I myself confidently believe that with the support of the public opinion of the world we may yet in the course of the next few months, see very important steps taken towards the greatest reform that can be carried out in the interest of humanity.

THE CHAIRMAN: May I now, in your behalf, thank Lord Robert for what he has given us, and bid him a very cordial goodnight.  
(Applause.)

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